

[Village Life]

When the ^{COUNTRY AND PEOPLE} second world war came, followed by Italian and German occupation and drastic derangement of the national economy, the situation of the hill villages became truly desperate. Starvation visited many of them. 433 731

Famine in time of war was age-old; and the response of the hillsmen of Greece also had very ancient precedent behind it, for they took gun in hand, and attempted to seize forcibly what they could no longer gain peaceably from the plains. They formed the backbone of the wartime resistance forces, and justified their violence by patriotism, quite in the spirit their forefathers had shown in attacking the Turks. Yet the resistance movement was not merely a reassertion of old patterns. Its leadership was mainly provided by Communists, who in earlier years had been a small and not very significant group, largely confined to the towns. 1 [579] 726 669 433 [668]

In the wartime resistance movement the inhabitants of the hill villages found a sort of economic relief, inasmuch as the guerrilla bands lived by raiding the plains, taking by force a part of the agricultural surplus of those regions in order to feed themselves. A young man, without any real occupation in his native village, and without any hope of a career at home which could satisfy even the traditionally low level of expectation among the hillsmen, could, by joining a guerrilla band, hope to feed himself and relieve his family of the burden of his presence. In addition, he could become a hero, fighting for freedom and liberty, social justice and a better life for all.

For most peasant boys, the ulterior aims of their Communist leaders meant little or nothing. Indeed, the Communists were at very considerable pains to play down any plans they had for social revolution, and welcomed persons of widely differing social views into the ranks of the resistance. This was, of course, 669

1. There were a number of non-Communist resistance bands also, but most of them did not last long, and the successful ones were confined to Epirus, in the northwest.

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in the hill villages (and in only slightly less degree the other young people of Greece also) lacked, yet desperately needed in order to confront the daily hardships and disappointments of private life. Here, I think, lay and continues to lie the secret of Communist influence in Greece. It was not so much the ultimate vision of wealth and ease and justice — Greek peasants are quite sophisticated enough to distrust such glittering baubles — but the mobilization of energies in the here and now to form a purposeful movement, surcharged with hope and optimism, that attracted the allegiance of so many restless young people.

At the least it seems correct to say that the guerrilla movements, with their attendant propaganda and real life experiences, created a population more or less chronically open to fresh revolutionary winds, from whatever direction they may blow. Even when jobs on roads and other sorts of construction opened up again in the 1950's, so that something resembling the old symbiosis of hill and plains could be resumed, the changed attitudes among the hillsmen remained quite obvious. Greece will have, for some considerable time to come, a substantial group of its population that is peculiarly receptive to movements of political dissent or outright revolution.

The real, physical problems presented by too many mouths and too little land have not been solved, and cannot be solved quickly by anything short of wholesale depopulation. But the tradition-bound attitudes which once made this precarious life seem inevitable, even if not right, have been profoundly eroded. Clearly, this is a dangerous and potentially explosive situation. What happens in the hill villages is likely to constitute the critical factor in the future political history of Greece.

The situation in the plains was different. Guerrilla bands seemed suspiciously like robbers, or at best like tax collectors, to the peasants of the plains villages from whom they demanded food. Comparatively few young men left such villages to join

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It could almost be said that the Americans, having failed to alter the political pattern of Greece by direct intervention in 1950 and 1951, succeeded in short-circuiting the political process by dealing directly with the rising group of civil servants whose general outlook and whose personal positions in the hierarchy of administration had been profoundly influenced by the aid mission itself. This provided, temporarily at least, a workable substitute for responsible self-government; but it was an essentially fragile structure, depending both on the continuance of American grants to Greece and upon the acquiescence of the politicians.

Signs were not wanting in 1956 that the acquiescence of the politicians could not always be depended upon. Neutralism as between the Soviet Union and the United States had a few public advocates, and several newspapers systematically played up incidents that reflected discredit upon American personnel. There were also repeated newspaper attacks upon the privileged status American officials enjoyed. In the fall of 1955 popular demonstrations of sympathy for the Cypriotes in Athens, Salonika and Patras took a rather violent anti-American turn, including the stoning of American official buildings. Wherever I went in 1956 the inevitable question was put: Why does the United States not live up to its principles and support Greek claims in Cyprus?

In this indirect fashion, the Cyprus question allowed public expression of restiveness against American influence in Greece to assume a politically respectable, i.e., non-Communist, form. Part, though by no means a major part, of the emotional energy behind the Cyprus agitation in Greece reflected resentment against the American leading strings which had controlled Greece so thoroughly for nearly ten years.

Because the Cyprus question offered release for many diverse frustrations and grievances, it attained extraordinary proportions. All other political issues were in almost total eclipse in

648 the summer of 1956. The opposition belabored the government
668 for failing to free the Cypriotes; the government swore that no
● effort had been spared; and each side rivaled the other in denouncing the stubbornness of Britain, the meddling of Turkey and the indifference of the United States. Events in Cyprus, where nearly every day people were killed as a result of the guerrilla operations of an organization known by the initials EOKA (Ethniki Organosis Kypriakou Agonos, or National Organization of Cypriote Fighters), occupied the most prominent place in every newspaper, and speeches or statements about the Cyprus question filled an amazing proportion of the space that remained. Nothing else seemed to matter very much; [52] and this attitude was not confined to newspapers. No conversation could long continue before the Cyprus question came up, and even very casual contacts between a Greek and an American were likely to produce an impassioned plea for Cyprus, together with reproaches against the United States government for failing to act in the matter.

From the point of view of someone interested in confronting and trying to relieve the economic and social difficulties of contemporary Greece, the Cyprus question was bound to appear totally irrelevant. If the Cypriotes were accorded the right to determine their own form of government, and if, as seemed overwhelmingly probable, the majority of the island's inhabitants then elected to unite with Greece, nothing would be helped so far as Greece's own problems were concerned. Yet by 1956 the liberation of Cyprus had become the very stuff and substance of Greek political debate. A more effective red herring would be difficult to imagine.

From the point of view of the Greek public, however, the Cypriote cause was sacred, and far more worthy of attention than merely economic questions. This attitude was deeply rooted in the political tradition of the nation. Indeed, the whole

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career of modern Greece, since the days when a small segment of the peninsula first won independence from the Turks, has been punctuated by recurrent bouts of intense popular excitement over the liberation of one or another portion of the Greek-speaking world that still remained under foreign sovereignty. In spite of costly failures, this agitation, and actions in accord with it, sooner or later added the Ionian Islands, Thessaly, Crete, Macedonia, the easterly Aegean Islands and part of Thrace to the Greek state. So successful has the nationalist program been that by 1956 Cyprus remained the only important area where a large Greek-speaking majority lived under foreign rule. The Greeks, therefore, felt entirely justified in demanding that such an anomaly end.

Anyone who takes democratic doctrines seriously must agree that the Greek case in Cyprus was a good one, since about 80 per cent of the islanders speak Greek and have given strong evidences of identification with Greece in recent years. Nor has the social and economic level of the Cypriotes been such as to justify a denial of self-government. Hence the Greeks of Greece had a good cause, and felt that the indifference of the United States to the issue, and the refusal of Britain to agree to grant self-government to Cyprus, represented a repudiation of their democratic professions. The burning conviction that the great powers were in the wrong and that the Greeks were in the right added fuel to the agitation, while Turkey's intervention in the question had the effect of opening once again all the wounds inflicted by past warfare between the two peoples.

On two occasions in the past, war with the Turks resulted from the desire of Greeks to liberate their fellow nationals, and on several other occasions war was narrowly averted by the intervention of the great powers. These wars and war scares cost Greece dearly in the past. One of the reasons for the failure of the economy to develop more rapidly was the financial bur-

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648 den the government incurred as a result of these enterprises;
•668 and the complete catastrophe which came to the Hellenic com-
[433] munities of Asia Minor in 1922 and 1923, following the failure
of the Greek effort to annex part of the eastern Aegean coast,
left marks upon the Greek body social which are still conspicu-
ous. Yet then, as more recently in the case of Cyprus, counsels of
caution or calculations of expediency scarcely found a hearing.
The warm feeling of patriotism, all the warmer for being so
reckless of consequences, overcame and continued to overcome
every obstacle.

The Cyprus question became acute in the spring of 1955
when EOKA began issuing manifestoes and throwing bombs in
the island, demanding self-determination and the end of colo-
nial administration. Whether, or in what degree, the Greek
government was an accomplice in provoking EOKA to action is
impossible to say. Clandestine support of irregular armed ac-
tion against a foreign government is an old tradition in the Bal-
kans. The Greek government was itself attacked in this indirect
fashion by Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Albania during the guer-
rilla war; and all the Christian nations of the Balkans used sim-
ilar methods against the Turks. The fact that the leader of
EOKA was reputed to be Colonel George Grivas, a man who
had once served in the Greek army, and who had been the head
of an extra-legal rightist armed band in the years just after the
end of World War II, suggested, but by no means proved, that
agents of the Greek government may have had a hand in organ-
izing the guerrillas in Cyprus.

If so (and this is not a proven fact), it seemed fairly clear
that in the months that followed EOKA's appearance in Cyprus
agitation in Greece grew to proportions that the government
had not expected, and did not really desire. To have an issue
upon which all Greeks could unite behind a government that

boldly demanded justice for the Cypriotes was one thing; to have an issue that threatened to disrupt the NATO alliance in the eastern Mediterranean and gave the opposition a chance to attack the government for its inability to bring the situation to a satisfactory conclusion was quite another. Yet it was this second, embarrassing position into which the Greek government soon fell. The British refused to give in; and during the summer of 1955 the Turks began to assert their own interest in the fate of Cyprus. 648 668 •

Greece and Turkey had both been admitted to NATO in the fall of 1951, and in 1954 Greece had also concluded an alliance with Yugoslavia. This laboriously constructed diplomatic and military bulwark, within which Greece might hope to shelter as securely as any nation could that stood on the frontier between the Communist and non-Communist worlds, now began to crumble; and by 1956, although the treaties remained nominally in existence, the ill feeling between Greeks and Turks had reached a pitch that made real cooperation impossible. Joint naval maneuvers had to be called off, and acute difficulties arose in the NATO headquarters at Smyrna, where Greek and Turkish officers had been working side by side.

As this situation developed, the Greek government became seriously embarrassed. On the one hand, it could not allow the opposition to flaunt the garb of patriotism without challenge. The publicity agencies of the government and the Athens radio thereupon indulged in a veritable orgy of rhetoric which could not fail to have an inflammatory effect in Cyprus and also at home in Greece. On the other hand, rumor had it that the royal palace and the Foreign Office urged caution and moderation — a spirit which, however carefully it was kept under cover, still gave the opposition a chance to denounce the halfheartedness and secret duplicity of the government.

648 Through 1956 at least, the Greeks had spilled nothing more
668 precious than words over Cyprus. The economic programs of
the government had not been affected, nor had the social realities of Greece been touched. What had changed were Greek relations with Turkey and Britain; and in 1956 it was hard to see how the resultant damage to the NATO alliance could be repaired. A change in British policy might bring the Cypriotes self-determination and union with Greece — an upshot that would gratify the Greeks, but scarcely improve relations between Greece and Turkey. On the contrary, such an eventuality might well be accompanied by open violence between Turks and Greeks on Cyprus itself, where the Turkish minority constitutes about 20 per cent of the population; and similar and more dangerous disorders might spread into Turkish and Greek Thrace, where the two peoples remain mingled owing to the exclusion of this area from the exchange of populations that followed World War I.

The embitterment of Greek-Turkish relations seemed likely to endure for a long time, to the embarrassment of the Americans who wished to remain in alliance with both sides of the quarrel. It was, of course, because American diplomats dreaded such difficulties, and did not wish to antagonize the British, that the official policy of the United States remained so much aloof from the Cyprus question in 1955 and 1956.

Whatever the eventual outcome may be, it seems clear that the excitement over Cyprus had the effect not only of distracting attention from home policy, but also of weakening the Greek cabinet and restricting its freedom of maneuver. Feeling was directed most strongly against the Turks, secondly against the British, and more faintly but still definitely against the Americans. The emotional involvement with Cyprus was so strong that in the summer of 1956 it did not seem beyond the bounds of possibility that some turn of events in Cyprus might

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bring about the overthrow of the Karamanlis government and the installation of a cabinet far less inclined to cleave to the western alliance system of NATO in foreign affairs, and far less amenable to American advice concerning home policy. 648 668 ●

What the effect of such a change might be upon the development of the economy, or upon the civil servants who were so busily planning its growth, cannot be forecast. My point merely is this: that the divorce between the realm of political discourse in Greece and the real problems of economic and social melioration within the nation is so wide as to be dangerous. Some economically ruinous action, rising from feelings of outraged nationalism, and provoked by politicians who hope to win place and prestige by risking everything on a politico-military gamble, may damage much of what has already been accomplished, or postpone indefinitely the realization of plans which have been laid for future economic expansion. 433 662 663

There are here the makings of a vicious circle. The major cause of the characteristic irresponsibility and extremism of Greek politics in recent decades, I am convinced, has been the chronic discontents and personal frustrations which tens of thousands of white-collar and professional people have felt. For them, politics offers a psychological release from daily difficulty and disappointment. To act as an adequate catharsis, political argument must be exciting, indeed inflammatory. The politicians therefore offer excitement, and when they cannot find it they try to manufacture it. If no internal foe seems sufficiently evil, then attacks are turned against some foreign antagonist. Political instability and changeability are the result, and when words boil over into actions real economic setbacks often follow — setbacks that feed the chronic discontent behind the political manifestations themselves.

Much of the domestic history of modern Greece can be interpreted as the result of such a vicious circle in action. The re-

433 construction of the economy and the transformation of the civil
662 service since 1947 seem to offer a chance for escape from this
663 circle, but escape is as yet by no means assured.

The Communist Problem

- 668 The Communist party was declared illegal in October 1947,
669 and has remained illegal since then. Communist party leaders
first joined the guerrillas, then retreated with the remnant of
the guerrilla army behind the iron curtain. It seems entirely
likely that the exile leadership was torn by faction and recrim-
ination. Backwash from the shipwreck of their hopes on the
Macedonian issue in 1949 must have continued to distract the
secret councils of the party. Equally, the changing winds of
doctrine that followed Stalin's death shook the Greek Commu-
nist party, and, combined perhaps with other factors, led in the
fall of 1956 to the demotion of Nicholas Zachariades and the
substitution of an almost unknown personality as Secretary
General.

Rather strenuous police measures were taken during the
guerrilla war to break up the Communist underground organ-
ization. Many people were arrested and several hundred were
shot. How effective these measures were in breaking down the
party organization cannot be judged by anyone standing out-
side the inmost party circles. Furthermore, the failure of the
guerrilla enterprise, and the collision between Greek national
feeling and international Communist policy over the question
of the future of Macedonia must have disheartened even the
most fanatical Communists in Greece, and certainly discredited
Communism in the eyes of many who had formerly been sym-
pathetic.

668 Whether these events mean that the Communist threat to
Greece is lastingly removed, or whether the Greek Communist

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party will be able to rise once more from its defeat and become again a disciplined, dominating force in internal Greek politics, will depend at least as much upon the course of international affairs as upon any efforts the Greek Communists may make by themselves.

Nevertheless, in 1956 signs were not wanting to show that Communism was still a force to be reckoned with in Greece. In spite of all the police had been able to do, it seemed certain that an illegal underground organization continued to exist, aimed more, perhaps, at collecting intelligence for foreign Communist states than at fomenting revolution in Greece. Greek-language broadcasts from behind the iron curtain continued to reach the country, informing the faithful of the proper attitudes to take on current political questions. The fact has already been mentioned that one Athens newspaper faithfully followed the line laid down by Communist broadcasts; a second appeared most sympathetic, though its editors did not always conform completely to Soviet directives.

On the political stage, a new party was formed in advance of the elections of September 1951 which seemed very like EAM, the Communist-dominated resistance front which had so nearly won control of Greece in 1944. This new party was known by the initials EDA (Enosis Dimokratikon Aristera, or Union of the Democratic Left). Its candidates in 1951 were drawn in considerable measure from among persons who had made a name for themselves during the wartime resistance — many of them being in jail as Communists when the elections were held.

In spite of these circumstances, EDA met with very considerable success. In 1951 it won 180,640 votes, and in the elections of 1952, 152,011. In both cases, the EDA total was close to 10 per cent of all valid ballots, amounting to 10.6 per cent in 1951 and 9.6 per cent in 1952. Inasmuch as EDA participated in an electoral coalition with other opposition parties in the election

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666 of 1956, it is impossible to tell how many votes it may have contributed to the opposition's total on that occasion.
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In 1951 and 1952, the defeat of the guerrilla army was still fresh and the demoralization of the Greek Communist party must have been serious. It therefore seems safe to assume that the proportion of about 10 per cent which EDA won in these elections represented about the minimal support the Greek Communist party commanded in the country. It is interesting to note, in passing, that a public opinion survey conducted by American and British experts in 1946 found 9.3 per cent of the population willing to declare to the faces of western interrogators an intention of following Communist instructions to abstain from the elections of that year. Very nearly the same proportion, and probably many of the same persons, supported EDA in 1951 and 1952. They must be regarded as "hard core" Communists or sympathizers so strongly attached to the party that nothing is likely to alienate them from Communist leadership.

Given the hardships under which many Greek families live and the history of the past fifteen years, during which on two separate occasions a Communist-led movement seemed on the verge of winning power, this proportion may appear satisfactorily, and even surprisingly, small. Many thousands of young people, after all, dedicated several years of their lives and underwent very real risks and discomforts in the service of a cause offered them by Communist propaganda. Such experiences and loyalties are not easily wiped out, especially when a person who has once been identified as a member of any sort of Communist organization is likely to suffer discrimination in job-hunting and in all contacts with the government forever after.

At the same time, a hard core of about 10 per cent of the voters constitutes a great political asset. It opens the door for

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deals with other parties and coalitions that may badly need just such support to win office. In 1956, the opposition coalition, under the leadership of George Papandreou, yielded to this temptation and accepted the proffered support of EDA. Papandreou was careful to announce, however, that in the event of victory he would not assign any seats in his cabinet to members of EDA; and after the election cooperation between EDA and Papandreou was promptly broken off.

Year in and year out, in the kaleidoscopic shifting of personal reputation that constitutes the warp and woof of Greek politics, it seems very doubtful whether any of the leaders of personal parties can regularly count on as much as 10 per cent of the vote. The apparently solid character of the Communist hard core thus takes on still greater significance. And in times when the discredit of the Communist party is not so recent as it was in 1951 and 1952, it seems at least possible that a fringe of fellow travelers and vague sympathizers — people who wish to protest vigorously against the status quo, and feel, quite correctly, that the Communists represent the most effective challenge to the prevailing social order — may add their votes to those of the hard core, and swell the proportion of the electorate responsive to Communist leadership quite considerably, perhaps to something like 20 per cent of the total.

This means, I believe, that the Communist problem has not been really solved. There still exists an important minority in the country which is prepared to go outside the framework of legality whenever opportunity offers a favorable prospect of success; a minority which on other occasions is ready to participate in the parliamentary process, to join electoral coalitions and to carry on newspaper campaigns against the government, but does all this fundamentally in bad faith, hoping to gain a foothold in the government only to convert it into a stranglehold,

- 668 and then destroy the parliamentary machinery and civil liberty in favor of Communist dictatorship.

668 In 1956 these things were not apparent. Communism was not
 648 an issue; Cyprus had replaced it, and the Communist party had
 officially endorsed the Cyprus struggle over the radio. No one
 admitted to being a Communist, since to do so would have been
 a short way to jail. The people seemed quite genuinely glad to
 be relieved of the long preoccupation with the Communist
 question, and to find a cause upon which everyone could unite.
 This was, indeed, one of the reasons why Cyprus was such a
 heart-warming cause for the Greeks. Everyone, no matter what
 his opinions on domestic issues, was behind the Cypriotes. The
 Greeks had not known what it was to be united on an important
 public issue since the time of the Albanian war in 1940. Yet if
 Communists and nationalists were to quarrel in Cyprus, a pos-
 sibility of which there were already some convincing signs in
 the summer of 1956, then the Communist question would
 emerge again in Greece with new bitterness, as each side sought
 to blame the other for the disruption of the Cypriote struggle.

- 66 In any analysis such as this it is easy to overemphasize the in-
 stability and insecurity of Greek political affairs. Certainly
 Greek politics are unstable, and the parliamentary regime in
 Greece is insecure. But it is well to remember that these condi-
 tions are not new. Exactly the same could be said of the politi-
 cal scene at any time since 1909, when the current phase of
 modern Greek political life began. The Greeks have learned to
 live with such conditions, and even manage to derive lively ex-
 hilaration from the perpetual uncertainty of their politics. With-
 out politics, what would there be to talk about in the cafés?

647 The things that are new in Greek public life attract little pub-
 829 lic attention. The man in the street and in the village coffee